

Jesus's Final Public Plea

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[0 : 00] This morning as we come to God's Word, we're continuing on in the story of Jesus according to John. So if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to John chapter 12, verse 44.

John chapter 12, verse 44. Let's just start by reading the first few verses here.

Then Jesus cried out, Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.

The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

The first thing that we want to consider this morning is when and where Jesus said this. Notice that just before this, John has been the one doing the talking. He's been explaining a little bit of what's going on.

[1 : 03] And here in verse 44, John just kind of jumps right back into the story of Jesus with, Then or now, Jesus cried out. There doesn't seem to be a specific occasion to these words of Jesus.

But we know from earlier in the chapter that this takes place sometime between the triumphal entry. And looking ahead, we can see that it happens just before the Last Supper in chapter 13.

And it seems from the way Jesus speaks and what he says that this is a public address. Notice the language. Jesus cried out. That kind of fits with speaking to the crowds.

And then finally, we notice the kinds of things that Jesus is saying. All of them are quite focused around believing in him and accepting his words. So it's likely that Jesus is somewhere in Jerusalem, perhaps at the temple courts.

And it's quite possible that these are sort of Jesus' last words to the crowds, to the public, before his betrayal and arrest. So what does Jesus have to say to the people here in Jerusalem just a day or two before his hour comes?

[2 : 18] What might be some of his last words to them? Well, this is it right here in verse 44 down to 50. And what may surprise us a little is that almost nothing that Jesus says here is really new.

If you've been following closely with John through this gospel, you'll notice that he's pretty much said all this stuff already, maybe a little bit different words. But given that this is Jesus' maybe last opportunity to speak to the public, to speak to the crowds like this, we would do well to listen one more time.

It's often what's most important that rises to the surface when time is short. So what will Jesus leave the crowds with in these last moments before his suffering comes?

Jesus starts by making one of his greatest claims, a claim he's made before, but with different words. Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.

The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. We've heard Jesus talk a lot about the one who sent him, and by now it's no secret who Jesus means.

[3 : 43] I think we all know, but just to refresh our memories, we can look back to chapter 10, verse 36. Jesus said there, What about the one who the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?

Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy? Because I said I am God's Son. So we know exactly who Jesus is talking about when he refers to the one who sent him.

He's talking about God, the Father, his Father. But now look at what Jesus is claiming about himself and God, the one who sent him.

Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.

All the Jewish people of Jesus' day know that they are to have faith in God. They know that they are to put their trust in God, that they are to believe him, just like Abraham did all those years ago.

[4 : 48] But now here is a man standing in front of them saying, The one who believes in me believes in God. The one who puts their faith in me puts their faith in God.

The one who trusts me trusts God. This is a huge claim. And Jesus is not just claiming to be an ambassador here.

I mean, look at what he follows this up with. He says, The one who sees me sees the one who sent me. In other words, The one who sees me, says Jesus, sees God.

The one who looks at me, says Jesus, is looking at God, the one who sent me. Jesus is claiming to be much more than an ambassador, much more than just a third-party representative.

And there's really only one way to make sense of his claim here, and it's to recall what he said earlier about his relationship with the Father. Think back to John 10, verse 30, where he said, I and the Father are one.

[6 : 02] And then moments later, at that same time, in verse 37 of chapter 10, he said, Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father.

But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.

Father, what has Jesus been claiming? Oneness with God. He's been claiming that God is in him, and that he is in God.

So much so that they are one. So much so that Jesus, the man, can say back in John chapter 8, verse 58, Before Abraham was born, I am.

Taking up the very name of God as his own. A claim that only God can make, and it wasn't blasphemy. This is what Jesus is getting at here in John chapter 12, verse 44.

[7 : 18] It's as though he's saying, I am so one with God, my Father, that if you look at me, you are looking at God, the one who sent me.

If you are seeing me, you are seeing him. It's an amazing reality that this man who walked among us, when they saw him, they saw God walking among them.

And all of this is not really a surprise to us. I mean, John has told us this right from the beginning of his gospel. He explained where Jesus came from. You'll remember those words.

John 1, 1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And verse 14, The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory.

John told us right from the beginning what Jesus is saying here now. This is certainly no ordinary man walking here, speaking here, among us.

[8 : 36] He's not even just a special chosen man like Noah, or Abraham, or Moses. This is God here among us, with us, in this man Jesus.

The divine Son of God. Mysteriorously, he shares the essence of Yahweh, the Lord.

somehow, beyond our understanding, he is a distinct person from the Father, and a full-blooded human being, and at the same time, is truly the Lord.

Yahweh, the one and only God. the Apostle Paul said it this way in his letter to the church at Colossae. In Colossians 2.9, he said, For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.

He said in chapter 1, verse 15 of that same letter, the Son is the image of the invisible God. Hebrews 1, verse 3, the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

[10 : 03] This is what Jesus is getting at when he says, The one who sees me sees the one who sent me. He is in me.

I am in him. We are one. Let's come back for a second to Jesus' first statement here. The one who believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.

It's not as though God and this man, Jesus, are somehow at odds with each other. It's not as though you can only put your faith in one of them at a time. Some people might be thinking, well, we either listen to you, Jesus, or we listen to God.

Jesus is saying, that distinction does not apply in my case. The one who listens to me listens to the one who sent me. The one who believes in me believes in God, my Father, who sent me.

By putting your faith in me, says Jesus, you are putting your faith in the one who sent me, in God, Yahweh, the Creator. this is the first and greatest claim of Jesus in this moment and it's something he wants people to know before he goes to his hour of suffering.

[11 : 25] Jesus doesn't stop there, however. He has more to say. Verse 46, I have come into the world as a light that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

darkness. Again, this is something Jesus has said before. He's already claimed twice publicly, I am the light of the world. John introduced Jesus back at the beginning of the gospel as the light of all mankind.

The true light, the light that was coming into the world and we've talked about how Jesus does what light does. He dispels the darkness.

He pushes back the ignorance. He reveals the truth of how things really are. He exposes the corruption and the evil in the lives and hearts of people.

And we've heard quite a few times about the condition of people in our world generally, how they hate the light, how they love the darkness and only a few it seems come into the light.

[12 : 35] Well here Jesus comes back to this familiar metaphor yet again. I have come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should remain in darkness.

Let's think about these words. What is the condition of you and me before Jesus, the light, comes into the world?

I mean Jesus, he tells us right here why he came as light into the world so that we should not or would not remain in darkness.

There's an implication here. Without Jesus, who is the light that came into the world, what would be our situation? We'd be stuck in darkness.

And darkness here mainly refers to ignorance, to not knowing the truth that we need to know. Imagine for a moment that you are working in the mines and you've gone down this mine shaft deep into the earth.

[13 : 48] Let's just say it's to inspect a piece of failed equipment that you're an expert in and you're down there at the end of an elaborate network of tunnels all by yourself working on this thing when all of a sudden the ground begins to shake and the lights go out.

Whatever was generating electricity for your lights fails as part of this large network collapses. You find yourself trapped in a rather small end of this tunnel.

And by the time you manage to dig your way through the debris to the next open section of tunnel, your headlamp is dead. your phone is dead.

And there's nothing you can do but grope around in the dark. And you feel and you hunt and you crawl around on all fours for hours but no matter how hard you try you can't find a way out.

You have no idea which way is north, south, east, west. You hear nothing. You see nothing. You can't even see your hand right in front of your face. It's pitch black because there is no light.

[15 : 01] Could it be that all the exits are blocked by the rubble from the cave-in and that you'll never find a way of escape? Or could it be that after days of searching you still haven't found the one open passageway that leads back to the surface?

This is a picture. This is a parable of our situation in this world. We are stuck in darkness, lost, because of our sins, because of our rebellion against God.

And without the light of Christ to show us the way out, we will remain there. We will never find the way out. We will never escape. We will remain there in the darkness until the day that we perish.

Christ Jesus has come to give us the light, to give us the truth that we need to be saved so that we can escape.

Do you want to escape the darkness? Do you want to know what life is like on the surface? What everything was meant to be like back when the world was young, before any taint of corruption had entered this world?

[16 : 17] Jesus is the light that has come into the world, sent from the Father up above, and he does not want anyone to be stuck, to remain, to be lost in the darkness.

He says, I came so that all who believe in me should not remain in darkness. But notice who it is that escapes the darkness.

According to Jesus, it's all who believe in me. Do you believe in Jesus? From here, Jesus tells us what will happen if we do not.

Verse 47, if anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words. The very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

[17 : 33] These are sobering words. We may choose not to keep the words of Jesus. We may choose not to obey him. We may choose not to accept the things that he's been saying.

we may choose to reject him. But if that's you, this is what Jesus wants you to know. He says, I did not come, at least not in this first time that he came.

I did not come to judge you, but to save you. but on the last day, my words which you rejected and tossed away, the things that I said and you heard, they will become the thing which judges you, the thing which leads to your condemnation.

And here's why, says Jesus, because my words, everything that I've been saying to you, it doesn't just come from me.

They are in fact the very words that God has commanded me to say to you. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words.

[18 : 48] The very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.

I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say. In other words, if you choose to disregard Jesus, to reject him, it's not just the words of a man named Jesus that you are disregarding and rejecting.

It's the words of God that you are disregarding and rejecting. And it will come back to you on the last day at your trial when you stand before the judge, says Jesus.

I hope you hear these sobering words of Jesus. This life is not a game. It's not just about fun and games. I mean, we're on a collision course, all of us, a sinking ship.

We're not free to do as we please. God has spoken through Jesus. He has showed us the way to escape and to be saved. And there are grave consequences for ignoring and rejecting Jesus and what God has said through him.

[20 : 09] You will go down with the ship. You will arrive at your trial only to find out that you've already sealed your fate if you rejected and tossed away the words of Christ that you heard.

finally, at the end here, we come full circle back to where we started. We heard Jesus claim at the beginning to have oneness with the Father.

The one who believes in me believes in the one who sent me, he said. The one who sees me sees the one who sent me. And now here, Jesus tells us pretty clearly a little different wording.

The one who hears my words hears the words of the Father who sent me. You may have heard this already but I love this. I find it so deeply fascinating.

Do you realize that the words of Jesus, the message of Jesus is not his own? Do you know where Jesus gets this teaching from that's been amazing people for the past three years in this story?

[21 : 20] does it surprise you to hear that everything Jesus says is what God has commanded him to say? I mean, isn't that something?

I only say what my Father has commanded me to say. I love this. It's fascinating to me. Jesus does not have an independent ministry.

Jesus is accountable for every word that he speaks and teaches. At the very least, he functions in his teaching just like the prophets of old did.

Let me show you this quickly in a couple of places because this might sound a little strange to us. I mean, what do you mean Jesus when you say that everything you say, the Father has commanded you to say all these things?

Think back to the story of Jonah. A familiar story we all know. First verses of the book of Jonah. The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai.

[22 : 26] Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because its wickedness has come up before me. God commanded the prophets like Jonah to speak on his behalf and it would appear at least for the prophets of old that it was possible for them to disobey.

Jonah did. He got on a ship and started sailing the opposite direction but God wouldn't take no for an answer from Jonah and he brought him right back and he commanded him a second time in chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.

So Jonah was commanded not only to go but also to proclaim specifically the message that God gave him and of course as the story goes this time Jonah went and he said what God told him to say and this is how it works with the prophets they didn't just make up the stuff that they said God commanded them to say specific things to the people consider Isaiah familiar passage Isaiah chapter 6 verse 9 God said to Isaiah go and tell this people be ever hearing but never understanding be ever seeing but never perceiving notice here again that God commanded Isaiah to go and speak on his behalf but he also commanded Isaiah precisely what to say to the people like the exact words say this or we could look at Jeremiah the Lord said to

Jeremiah Jeremiah chapter 11 verse 3 tell them the people of Judah that this is what the Lord the God of Israel says cursed is the one who does not obey the terms of this covenant the terms I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt out of the iron smelting furnace again God command commanded Jeremiah exactly what words to speak on his behalf to the people in the same chapter just a little further down the page at verse 6 the Lord said to Jeremiah proclaim all these words in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem and then he gives the words listen to the terms of this covenant and he goes on Ezekiel chapter 34 verse 1 and 2 same thing the word of the Lord came to me says Ezekiel son of man prophesy against the shepherds of Israel prophesy and say to them this is what the sovereign Lord says woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves again

God commanded Ezekiel exactly what words to say on his behalf to the people this is how it worked with Moses at least 16 times by a rough count this week that I did God said to Moses say to the Israelites or say to Pharaoh and then he gave Moses the exact words to say there's another 20 times through Leviticus and there's a few more in numbers say to the Israelites and God gave them the exact words to say this was the mark of a true prophet of the Lord they literally heard the voice of God speaking to them in their heads all the time throughout their ministries as often as the Lord wanted to say something to the people you may remember this with Samuel the boy who came to live at the tabernacle in Shiloh back in the days just he was there and you might remember the story of how

[26 : 19] God called out to him in the night he didn't know who it was at first the Lord spoke to Samuel and we read in 1 Samuel chapter 3 verse 19 that the Lord was with Samuel as he grew up and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground why was it that none of Samuel's words fell to everything Samuel predicted and said came true because God knows the future and God was the one telling Samuel exactly what to say to the people so what we hear from Jesus is not a new thing that's happening he said for I did not speak on my own but the father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken so whatever I say is just what the father has told me to say

Jesus served God as a prophet which doesn't just mean that he made predictions it means primarily that he spoke on God's behalf to the people telling them exactly what God commanded him to say to them it means that just like the prophets of old Jesus too heard the voice of his father in his head all the time I would argue even more so because he's the very son of God and unlike the prophets of old has this deep unity and oneness with the father Jesus is the ultimate prophet it's not just a cool thing that we hear in Bible college and systematic theology textbooks that's what Jesus is telling us right here my words to you all of them are God's words to you well what do we do with all this many

Christians today are excited about Bible prophecy mainly because they believe that all kinds of Bible prophecies that were unfulfilled in the past are being fulfilled today in our day and current events and what we read in the news and at the root of some of this excitement I think is the sincere love of discovery the sincere desire to figure out just what those prophecies in the Bible point to for others it's just a sincere desire to see what we long for the Lord to come back to return the end to be here that is our hope after all but we need to be careful here because the excitement for some is mainly in the unfulfilled prophecies in the future prophecies in the words of prophecy that predict as if the other words of prophecy that don't predict are just kind of old and boring what do we learn from Jesus here we learn that every word that

Jesus spoke is prophecy all of his words are the words of God that's the biblical definition of a prophet what if we were as excited today about everything that Jesus said as we are about the things that pertain to the future what if we gave the same attention to the commands of Christ today as we give to the words Christ spoke about the end times if every word that Jesus spoke is prophecy is from God shouldn't we deeply love and treasure all his words and not just the ones that tickle our fancy this is one thing that we can take from Jesus words but more importantly I hope we hear the fullness of what Jesus is claiming in this last perhaps public address before his hour of suffering imagine that you're there in the crowd listening to

Jesus cry out what does Jesus want you to know what does he want you to believe before he goes to the cross he wants you to know that he is one with his father and that in him you are seeing God the one who sent him he wants you to know that he is the light in this dark world that we live in he is the reliable source of truth that has come from outside of our world to light the way for us Jesus wants you to know that if you do not receive and believe his words today your rejection of his words will seal your fate on the last day and finally Jesus wants you to know that God has much to say to you and that every word that he has been speaking for these past three years has been the very words God commanded him to say to us do you believe what Jesus is saying to you do you believe that Jesus is

[32 : 04] God in human flesh walking here speaking here among us this is why we don't hesitate to worship this man Jesus because he is God he is the light he is the way he is the truth he is the life and so much more let's pray father in heaven we bow before you we're in awe of what you have done in sending your son to save us we barely even fully understand how trapped and lost we were but we thank you that Jesus has come to set us free and to give us life and hope for all eternity what an awesome gift we don't deserve it but we say thank you and we praise you for your love for your grace

I pray Lord we pray that you would give ears to the people in this community to hear these words of Christ this plea of Christ on our lips we ask this in his name amen okay yeah